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Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Tenth Conference (for distribution only)

Report of Norway

Summary**

The Norwegian Place Names Act of 1990 was amended in 2006 and again in July 2015. The most significant change in 2015 concerned the spelling of names of smallholdings, whereby the owner of a smallholding now has the right to decide on the spelling of the geographical name of the property as long as documentation therefor can be obtained. New regulations for the Act entered into force in May 2017, giving the Language Council of Norway and the Sami Parliament of Norway legal authority to establish detailed spelling principles for geographical names.

The Norwegian Mapping Authority is responsible for the central register of place names, which contains the forms of geographical names approved in accordance with the Act. It currently contains 996,000 geographical names, with 1,178,000 spellings of 975,000 named places. Some 105,000 spellings are determined by law. The register was updated and put into production in 2016.

Unique addresses with street names and numbers help to ensure that people can locate an address more swiftly in an emergency and/or deliver services or goods. Accordingly, the Government of Norway initiated a project to create road addresses with street names for every household, business and building in the country. The project, led by the Mapping Authority, officially ran from 2010 to 2014, but work is in fact continuing. In May 2017, 90 per cent of all address objects in Norway had been assigned an official address with a street name and number. The Place Names Consultancy Service, administered by the Language Council and the Sami Parliament, has spent significant time and resources over the past few years

* E/CONF.105/1.

** The full report was prepared by Ingvil Nordland (Senior Adviser, Language Council of Norway), Kjetil Ringen (Senior Engineer, Norwegian Mapping Authority) and Lisa Monica Aslaksen (Head of Section, Sami Parliament of Norway). The report is available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf11.html, in the language of submission only, as document E/CONF.105/89/CRP.89.

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providing advice on street naming for municipalities.

Although the Place Names Act and the Sami Act have been in force for more than 20 years, their implementation is lacking at several levels. One positive development, however, has been in the representation of Sami geographical names on road signs. The Norwegian Public Roads Administration has decided to add Sami names to existing signs and to use Sami names when signs are erected.

Ongoing local government reform will substantially reduce the number of administrative units in Norway. The Language Council offers guidance on questions concerning the names of new municipalities and counties.

The University of Oslo decided to discontinue the language archives and the associated name archives and its place name research group in 2015. In May 2016, the archives were transferred to the University of Bergen, with fewer academic and financial resources. It remains unknown whether the relocation will result in a revitalization of the name research environment in Norway. In the meantime, the toponymic expertise needed for the implementation of the Place Names Act is rapidly decreasing.

The Mapping Authority, the Place Names Consultancy Service, the Language Council and the Sami Parliament meet yearly to discuss legal, professional and organizational matters regarding the standardization of geographical names. The ongoing revision of the Place Names Act and its regulations has been a central point of discussion at these meetings over the past five years.